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and Suppliers of Park Services**

Institute of Urban & Regional Development
University of California, Berkeley

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Women and Urban Parks: Their Roles as Users and Suppliers of Park Services*Galen Cranz*

This chapter reviews the status of women in urban parks both as users and suppliers of recreational services from a historical perspective. Based on case studies of New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, the paper looks at the role of women as actors and pawns in the history of efforts to solve urban problems (1850 to 1979).

Women have had different statuses in each of the four periods of American urban-park history. In the pleasure-garden era (1850 to 1900) women's role as users was largely restricted to a family role; as suppliers they worked through the channels of philanthropy. In the reform-park era (1900 to 1930) age differentiation dictated different offerings for mothers, children, and workers. As suppliers they worked primarily through social-work agencies or the recreation division, rather than the park division, of municipal departments. In the era of the recreation facility (1930 to 1965) women were hired to do men's jobs during the war and for the first time were appointed to the boards of park commissioners. In the era of the open-space system (1965 to the present) females were less important than riot-prone youths, but as middle-class shoppers they were the focus of attention and consequently influenced the form of the vest-pocket park. As suppliers of recreational service they brought the arts into the parks and continued to serve, albeit as a token minority, as commissioners.

The chapter analyzes the demographic characteristics of male versus female commissioners, the different kinds of problems that interested male versus female commissioners, the pattern of staff positions held by women and men. Finally, the chapter concludes with some suggestions for how women might claim parks as a means to serve their needs and their societal goals.

Presented at the Symposium on Leisure Research, New Orleans, 28 to 29 October 1979. The theme of women as park users is fully elaborated in "Women and Urban Parks," *Signs* (Spring 1980). The theme of women as park-policy makers is in "Women and Urban Parks: Their Roles as Users and Policy Makers," *Lincoln Institute of Land Use Policy*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 8 November 1979. For an intermediate draft write the Institute of Urban and Regional Development, University of California, Berkeley, California, 94720.

Introduction

American urban parks were a nineteenth-century creation, designed to right the imbalances of industrialization and urbanization. Parks were one of the first welfare institutions—right after sewer systems and before all but the most rudimentary housing, welfare, and school regulation—that municipalities adopted as an appropriate government function. Mid-nineteenth-century policy makers were cautious about deliberate intervention in the theoretically free market economy; at that time parks were a big first step toward state spending. Their justification was that a judicious land-use policy could be a mechanism of urban reform. City leaders hoped to ameliorate class conflict, family disintegration, the commercialization of culture, density, pollution, disease, and psychological stress.

Over time political and cultural leaders perceived different sets of urban problems, each, in turn, corresponding to an underlying concept about the nature of the city. They adjusted their notions about what kind of parks would best solve these problems accordingly. Four different ideal types have emerged since the 1850s as the most suitable ways to redress urban problems. They are the pleasure garden (1850 to 1900), the reform park (1900 to 1930), the recreation facility (1930 to 1965), and the open-space system (1965 to the present).¹

The significance of parks for urban-land use lies as much in their history as in their present life. Parks have had a physical impact on the city in that their sites often shaped patterns of urban development, especially the location of wealthy residential areas and transit lines. Present patterns of open space and built areas are a product of past site selection. The pattern of institutional development is also largely the product of the parks movement. It was one of the first urban-reform movements, enveloping to a greater or lesser extent the issues of public health, class conflict, mental health, delinquency, alcoholism, prostitution, child welfare, family welfare, traffic congestion, and slum clearance. Many of these other urban-reform movements have since distinguished themselves from the park movement, but the origin of urban-reform institutions often lies imbedded within the same groups who agitated for public parks.

Women have been involved with these issues primarily as users and secondarily as policy makers. Each model had distinctive assumptions about how women should use each park type and about what ends would be served as a consequence; the ways in which park leadership has tried to deploy females have varied with the historical perceptions of what was wrong with society and the city. But leadership has consistently used women to solve other problems rather than treating them as a users' group in their own right.

Assumptions about female use of public parks partially limited women's range of possible behaviors. The link between parks and public

life meant that assumptions about female behavior in parks potentially influenced women's general civic involvement, not only their activities within parks themselves.

Women played a minor role in the formulation of park policy, relative to that of men. Yet some served as commissioners, employees, or volunteers. Up to now, those few women have usually shared the male diagnoses of contemporaneous problems. The records do not reveal differences of opinion between male- and female-policy makers; nor do they show distinctive ideas coming from women. Official records are unlikely to report any conflict whatsoever and probably not likely to credit female employees, commissioners, volunteers, or philanthropists with introducing an idea. Nevertheless, if women ever appropriate parks to meet their own needs and solve their own problems, we can anticipate a new park type, different from the preceding four.

Women as Users

Women in the Pleasure Garden (1850 to 1900)

Nineteenth-century reformers believed that the family could cushion the individual from many urban stresses, yet they feared that the family itself was being undermined. Women's central role in the family meant that urban reform and women were often linked explicitly. The park commissioners, not wanting to compete with the home as the proper mechanism of moral reform, insisted that the park would help reinforce the family unit. Park advocates thought that a respectable setting where a woman could appear in public with her husband would contribute to a family's sense of itself. Additionally, "A large use of the Park by families, by good women and dutiful children," would set a tone that would demand high standards for public behavior from everyone.²

For a public setting to function in these ways, it had to be a respectable setting for middle-class women, and accordingly an endless theme was that the park must be made a safe resort for unprotected ladies, women, mothers, wives, and children. Since the park was to be a respectable setting for women alone or in the company of men, refreshments were ideally non-alcoholic, although municipalities experimented with wine and beer in order to broaden the appeal of park restaurants. Since the park was for respectable women, prostitutes were automatically excluded from park life.

Women's ideal role was not as a user of facilities for games and sports but as a stabilizing presence. Nevertheless, women, especially young women, were responsible for much of the burgeoning interest in athletics. They began to play lawn tennis, croquet, and basketball, and to ride bicycles in the 1890s. When girls, wives, and mothers diverted from their passive

function—as they did almost immediately—newspapers responded with disbelief and disdain. Despite psychological ambivalence and denial on the part of reporters, they noted in the same breath that women used park facilities more than did men.³

The artistic images of women's role in public parks were slow to acknowledge the reality of their active sports life. Artists, like park planners, confirmed the ideal that women would be tied to the family and their men, while extending a calming presence on the public scene. In photographs, however, the ideal is betrayed by reality: women are seen in pairs teaching each other how to skate or fixing their own bicycles and equipment without help from men.⁴

Women in the Reform Park (1900 to 1930)

Settlement house workers wanted to bring wholesome recreational opportunities to the working class, especially the "children and women of the wage-earning families," who had neither the time nor the money to travel to the outlying pleasure grounds.⁵ At the same time playground advocates wanted to ensure that urban children got enough physical exercise in a safe setting. At the turn of the century park and playground advocates successfully pressured for legislation to create the small park in the heart of the dense tenements. Because this new park was a part of the larger progressive era, its purposes are succinctly summarized by the term *reform park*.

In order to counteract the commercialization of culture and at the same time organize the working person's unprecedented increase in leisure time, reformers hoped to replace movies, dance halls, and saloons with wholesome sports. However, they decided they had better accept the popularity of social dances by sponsoring and chaperoning them closely rather than pretend they did not exist.

Park promoters wanted to use the park to assimilate immigrants, reduce nervousness, and fight delinquency. Park departments all around the country took special pride in the potential of the park movement to reduce juvenile delinquency. Since this problem was defined by and large as a male problem, park administrators did not even collect statistics for girl offenders.

Both women and girls began to use the parks for active sports in the pleasure-garden era. Thus their increasing participation after 1900 was not the dramatic reversal claimed by reform-park theorists, but an acceleration and rationalization of a previously established behavior. The reform-park philosophy began to catch up with this reality by treating women as users in their own right and not primarily as instruments through which to influence men's behavior.

The relationship between the sexes changed dramatically. The pleasure garden emphasis on the family unit entailed both age and sex integration; in contrast, the reform model turned age and sex segregation into virtues. The theoretical justification was grounded in developmental theory:

The psychological, sociological, and physiological factors involved in the play interests of a group of sixteen-year-old boys differ from the interests of a group of seven-year-old boys, and the interests of a group of fourteen-year-old girls differ from both. Separate and distinct gymnasiums, therefore, with apparatus of the character, sizes, and heights adapted to these groups' interests were planned and installed.*

The family would no longer use the park, but its individual members would use it as their own time schedules permitted, set by the rhythms of their own schooling or work. Park organizers divided the day into sections and offered programming appropriate to the school children who would come before and after class, the mothers who would bring toddlers in the late morning, the working men who might take lunch breaks there, working boys and girls who could visit in the evening after work and dinner. Idealists no longer used the park as a setting for trying to counter the fragmented, scheduled rhythms of urban industrial life but rather attempted to integrate it temporally as well as physically with the surrounding industrialism.

Designers divided parks into separate spaces for each age and sex. If males and females or different age groups happened to use the park at the same time of day, staff expected them to use the part designed for them. The outdoor gymnastic equipment for men and women was located at opposite ends of the park, with a building or trees, shrubbery, and lawns in between. Furthermore, a fence enclosed the women's area, in turn concealed by shrubbery. (In accordance with today's preoccupation with safety, rather than propriety, this screen of shrubbery would have been eliminated and the area prominently lit in order to increase surveillance of the area.) A recurrent specification in park reports and other literature throughout this entire era was that areas of a park, and especially benches, should be reserved exclusively for the "use of women and their children."⁷ Boys and girls were also segregated. The spaces, the equipment, the games, and the rules of the game all reflected sex-role differentiation. Park planners thought that segregation promoted safety (although today urban planners believe that only mixed use peoples places enough to make them safe).

The reform park also contained public baths, originally introduced as a sanitation measure, but immediately popular as a form of recreation. Soon "provision was also made for their use by women during certain restricted periods."⁸ Generally, women had two days and nights each week, whereas

boys and men got three days and nights.⁹ In the 1920s, when mixed bathing was finally allowed in pools, attendance increased.¹⁰

Sexual segregation, sex-role stereotyping, and unequal treatment to the point of discrimination are closely linked. The theoretical rationale for separating boys and girls assumed that they were different and at the same time guaranteed that treatment of the sexes would not be equal. For example, boys often had a larger playground than girls, or other resources were allocated unevenly.

The park programming reinforced stereotypes on the one hand but threatened them on the other. The sheer fact of accommodating females, separate or not, suggested that women's needs for recreation were similar to males'. Furthermore, the vigor with which females pursued activities must have laid many ideals about female passivity to rest. The varied reactions to female sport left a zigzag trail of pronouncements throughout park records. The prevailing cultural attitudes toward women's ultimate goals as wives and mothers meant that athletic activity for women and girls had to be justified in terms of motherhood. Even when the public record acknowledged that girls have a competitive spirit and might like to join in athletic contests, their tournaments still had to be held under special conditions because of the widespread opinion that respectable girls could not appear in public without supervision. This was the case even after World War I, when park planners began to recognize that girls needed more freedom to engage in a wider range of sports.

Women in the Recreation Facility (1930 to 1965)

Sex-role segregation, although still practiced, began to wane in the era of the recreation facility. The practice of designing special sections of the park, playground, or beach for females dwindled.¹¹ Planners included more types of females in more types of activities.

Special classes for women's activities continued into the mid-thirties, but segregation reached its limits. Park departments concluded that "co-recreation parties had greater appeal than when segregation of the sexes is enforced."¹² The pragmatic impetus toward sex-role integration was that park departments wanted to increase their attendance figures, but ideology was soon hot on its trail. The emphasis in the 1950s was on family togetherness, and the idea that "Mom, Pop, and the kids must do things as a group," returning full circle via new sources to pleasure-garden attitudes toward the family.¹³ In direct opposition to reform-park ideology, the recreation theorists said that a recreation program should be directed at "keeping the family together instead of separating it into skill and age groups."¹⁴

As females came to be perceived as less distinctive and less in need of protection, the literature no longer insisted that women should not go out alone in public. But apparently objective conditions did not change, for complaints regarding "offenses against women" became more frequent.¹⁵

Despite the decrease in sexual segregation, sex-role stereotyping did not decline.¹⁶ By the end of World War II, public-relations stunts had reached a peak and programming a nadir, epitomized by Chicago's "Easter hat parade."¹⁷ In order to combat the image of women as workers as they had been during the war, park publicity introduced photographs of women in sexually alluring poses. Sex-role stereotyping was also perpetuated through children's activities.

Women in the Open-Space System (1965 to Present)

The central goal of the open space system was to help revitalize the inner city visually, economically, and socially. The new attitude toward open space was that it was valuable wherever found. Planners abandoned previous standards regarding size, shape, topography, and location. Consequently, park departments picked sites as small as a lot for both the adult vest-pocket park and the children's totlot and adventure playground.¹⁸ Designers believed that the value of all unbuilt spaces—streets, sidewalks, plazas, parks, and playgrounds—would be enhanced if linked together into a network. Accordingly, street-tree planting, street furniture, and attention to surfaces would help make streets and other open spaces seem continuous. Programming reinforced the idea by organizing events (*happenings*) in the streets or from one place to another through the streets.

Implicitly, the goal of central-city revitalization focused on middle-class users—the businessmen and businesswomen on their lunch breaks from downtown offices—and the upper-middle-class suburban shoppers being courted back to the central business district. Thus the needs of middle-class women for a safe and attractive urban environment have directed park planning for adults. Paley Park in New York City is an example of an environment designed for the relief of the shopper and white-collar worker: tucked between two buildings, its sheet of falling water at the back muffles traffic noise.¹⁹

The concern for riot control in the late 1960s meant that ghetto youth were also a target population for the park department. Cultural programming was updated to include elements of popular and hip culture: rock concerts, be-ins, experiential celebrations, dancemobiles. Keeping swimming pools open at night was credited with having directly helped keep New York City "cool" while other cities erupted in riot. Planners seldom needed to explain that "ghetto youth" were black adolescent males; girls' recreational

needs have not been enunciated clearly in this era. Women's athletic needs have been acknowledged by maintaining separate programs in volleyball, basketball, and softball, while adding belly-dancing and yoga classes. Nevertheless, park programming has remained predominantly male oriented.

Women as Policy Makers and Employees

Most of the ideas about how women should behave in parks, and what good this would accomplish for the rest of society, were espoused by men. Men made the decisions and the plans for women and carried out the programs that they designed. Over time, women started to take a greater role in the organization of park affairs, but they have not yet gained enough control to enable one to assess whether or not they will bring a new vision of park service with them. The force of female influence has remained weak, despite the large numbers of women supervisors at the beginning of the reform park era.

Women participated in designing park activities as volunteers—including philanthropists, commissioners, and the civic-minded—or as paid employees. In the twentieth century the professional recreation worker has tended to replace the volunteer, in keeping with the decline of amateurism in so many spheres of life. The consequence of the rise of paid professionalism for women, whose major contribution has been through voluntary work, is a reduced arena for decision making; unless they reverse this historical trend by seeking paid positions.

Volunteers

When nineteenth-century park-fund raisers were looking for support from philanthropists, they looked to wealthy gentlemen not to women. Similarly, no women served as commissioners during the pleasure-garden era, the period of large-scale capital construction. But women philanthropists did support the neighborhood reform parks in the early twentieth century,²⁰ and thereafter women supported major projects in pleasure gardens as well as reform and recreation-style parks. Moreover, since the emphasis on socialization of children and direct moral tutelage made the association of women with the reform movement acceptable—childcare was perceived in keeping with their primary roles as mothers and socializers of children—women began to serve as commissioners. In San Francisco, where the Recreation and Park Commissions remained separate for nearly fifty years, the Recreation Commission always had two female members by charter

requirement. Because of this division, San Francisco's Park Commission was able to avoid women members until the two Commissions joined in 1950.²¹

After 1920 and equal suffrage, mayors began to appoint females to park commissions, in token numbers. Whether a contributory cause or one of the many effects, the rise of female appointees coincided with the decline in the occupational and social status of male commissioners.²² In either case, both corresponded to the decline of parks in the public mind as a viable mechanism of urban reform.

Men and women have been represented equally in the passionate one-person crusades to rally support for parks.²³ In recent years, the presidents of the Friends of Central Park, the Greensward Foundation, and so forth, have been women. And women's organizations, civic clubs and charities have always been active promoters of park projects.²⁴ Sometimes women's organizations have even been vocally critical of park actions. Thus, after the merger of the Recreation and Park Commissions in San Francisco, women's organizations circulated a resolution claiming that the merger had hurt parks and demanding that they be separated again.²⁵ In the nineteenth century such groups were influential. Newspapers claimed that the support of women's groups could make or break a reform movement. In particular, when the playground movement was first getting under way in New York City in the 1900s, its failure was attributed to several factors, among them the fact that the women in the community were ignored. During the reform era, the Annual Reports and the minutes of the cities of San Francisco, Chicago, and New York report numerous letters and delegations from groups of women advocating a policy, requesting the establishment of a park, or offering some recreation-related service.

After women were granted the vote, *Park International* ran a special article on women in park work.²⁶ Women's influence was thought to be different from men's; for example, women voted four and one-half to one in favor of parks, whereas men voted only two to one in their favor. The editors argued that women had a particularly strong interest in civic welfare, so that they, more than men, campaigned to turn unused land into successful parks. Then, as now, women took a special interest in both natural and architectural preservation. Restoration, rather than construction, was one of their cultural bailiwicks.

The recreation movement heralded the switch from volunteer to professional labor as "one of the most significant developments since 1900," but volunteerism did not disappear entirely. Most of the volunteers were women who offered their help during Depression unemployment, brought food to servicemen's centers during the war, worked through the numerous women's organizations which cosponsored many special events, such as the victory gardens of the wars, and the garden for the blind in the 1950s.²⁷

Women's clubs were one of the major categories which a park department took into account in mounting a park campaign.²⁸ The League of Women Voters supported park operations, for example, by paying for a study to see how a park plan would fit into the overall master plan for a town.²⁹ Through community development associations women had an influence on park activities; these groups often appear in park minutes as supplicants, and women often played a substantial role in these neighborhood groups.

Park commissioners and administrators like women's support to come through voluntary organizations. Their description of this kind of help is effusive:

Democracy brought with it . . . women's emancipation from serfdom. But more than relief from domestic drudgery and release from lives lived out behind the four walls of the home, it lent emphasis to the feminist democracy of the women's club movement. The ideals of the mothers of men are becoming articulate as this mobilization of the women of the city moves forward.³⁰

They did not have to be beholden to them as they would to a big-name philanthropist; they did not have to worry about women professionals taking jobs away from men, nor volunteers inadvertently doing the same. Finally, through women's clubs, men could vicariously express their own idealism:

Enrichment of the cultural life of their community is not their only aim . . . they are also introducing new forces of united determination that the problems of living closely associated with one another shall find happier practical solutions than a male society has yet evolved, with the brief attention men can spare from business to devote to social well-being.³¹

Through women's greater idealism, safely parceled and isolated, men could acknowledge their own altruistic side without having to change their behavior.

Employees

The landscape profession let women into its ranks only at the very end of the pleasure-garden era. At the turn of the century, the landscape gardeners, represented in San Francisco by the Pacific Coast Horticultural Society considered whether or not ladies in the trade should be admitted into membership.³² The American Park and Outdoor Art Association organized a Women's Auxiliary with a membership of 8, which jumped to 221 in two years.³³ When the first president of the Women's Auxiliary retired in 1903

addressed the association, one wonders just how much tongue in cheek: "My only excuse, being a woman, in speaking to park makers is that I have visited nearly all the important parks of Europe and America and know something about them, and that it may be a new experience to hear a woman's ideas about parks."⁴⁴

In contrast to this slow acceptance of female employees in the pleasure garden, reform-park commissioners hired women professionals as readily, if not more so, than in any other profession, including education. At first women were in all ranks of employment, including the top. The most prestigious women in this field entered through their involvement with settlement-house work (for example, Mary E. McDowell in Chicago), and by the end of the era were represented by social scientists (for example, Professor Jessica Peixotto, Department of Economics at Berkeley, 1922). Suddenly, female attendants and "competent women" were hired to supervise playgrounds and public toilets.⁴⁵ During the first quarter of the century, a majority of the paid leaders were women.⁴⁶ The 1932 Yearbook of the National Recreation Association reported nearly 26,000 play leaders employed at the beginning of the recreation era. Slightly over half of them were men, which means that women were still unusually well represented in this profession.⁴⁷ However, fieldhouse directors were almost always men "of refinement, education, initiative, and social training. . . ."⁴⁸ Implicitly, only a man could be "head, guide, and promoter."⁴⁹

Despite their equality in numbers, educational requirements and pay for men and women were always unequal. Females were more educated for the job but paid less than male instructors; the reasons were so self-evident and so just that no explanation had to be offered in either the official public records or the newspapers.⁵⁰ The New York Annual Report for 1912 stated explicitly that women's duties on the girl's side were more complicated than on the boys' side, and called for a wider diversity of talents, partly because girls' work and play required more individual instruction, but nevertheless women were paid one-half to three-quarters as much as men; the inequity was built into civil-service regulations.⁵¹

On the whole, women-policy makers showed no more sensitivity to women's needs than men had. In 1931 a women superintendent of the Playground Commission recommended that the commission set up a demonstration playground where mothers visiting the San Francisco Annual Food Show could leave their children. Similarly, in San Francisco in 1926, a representative of the Golden Gate Kindergarten Association, most likely female, was turned down when she asked the Playground Commission to consider the purchase of property near Mission Playground so that their group could use it for a nursery kindergarten.⁵² But there is little record of pressure of this kind, and despite the influx of female administration and staff, no changes in policy occurred. This suggests that the differences

between the "pure-park" adherents and the "recreationists" were not really male-female differences and that women were no more interested in direct service than in an indirect impact through landscaping. Indeed the men themselves argued the difference between a policy of maintenance and construction and one of service. But whether or not women were more sensitive to the needs of women and girls than men had been, they were operating in a structure controlled if not staffed by men, so not many differences surfaced.⁴³

In both World Wars park commissions had to remove restrictions against women in order to fill certain jobs. During World War I, women-staff members provided continuity in the face of male turnover. Women took over men's jobs during the first World War, with the clear understanding that this was a temporary measure. Despite female help, the park stewards could easily overlook them: one landscape architect wrote "As much if not more than anyone else has the *park man* a mission to fulfill in these days of strife and in the days of readjustment that will follow" [emphasis added].⁴⁴

During World War II, park bureaucrats established a new grade of employment to allow women to assist at traffic crossings, automobile parking lots, band concerts, and special events. Females were an adjunct to the police department, uniformed, but without the authority to make arrests. By 1942 Chicago administration also recruited women as florists and laborers,⁴⁵ and a year later it decided to accept female applicants for the position of lifeguard.⁴⁶ Of the ninety women so employed, they "performed their duties splendidly despite the fact that they were all 'rookies.' They . . . were, for the most part, conscientious and punctual. The public accepted the women lifeguards with very little comment and much respect."⁴⁷ Golf course personnel also became female, but

. . . to combat the prejudices of the public in the innovation of women ticket-sellers, unusual care was taken in the selection of the employees and a continuous program of instruction was maintained with reference to rules and regulations of registration, ticket sales, operation of case registers, and compiling of daily reports. As a result, the turnover rate was reduced and complaints of unsatisfactory service were rare.⁴⁸

Eventually age limits were cut in order to recruit boys.⁴⁹ The Park Departments had to rely increasingly on boys, since women were not always available since they, too, could get higher wages in war industries.⁵⁰

Men came to view female dominance of the new playground work as a weakness of the recreation profession which they wanted to reverse. They were successful during the depression, when relief spending was used primarily to hire male workers, on the grounds that their income was what

kept a family going. The practice of hiring women to fill men's jobs while they were at war was anxiety producing to those who had higher ambitions for the recreation professions. Four-fifths of the women employed throughout the nation in all fields wanted to stay in their jobs after the war (according to Chafe), but they were replaced by men.¹¹ Thus women lifeguards were still judged "punctual, conscientious, and obedient, and generally their work was indeed commendable" in 1946.¹² By 1951, however, the same reports did not mention women lifeguards, giving the impression that the report writers are holding their breaths in hopes that no one would remember that women had once been commendable.¹³ And by 1956, after the effects of the war had evaporated, the Yearbook of the National Recreation Association boasted that men outnumbered women in both part-time and full-time categories. The association viewed the rising percentage of men as an indicator of the increasing prestige of the profession: "This striking increase indicates a growing recognition of recreation as a worthy field for service. . . ."¹⁴

Still, though men silently edged women out of their leadership responsibilities in this movement, women could not be ousted entirely.¹⁵ They were valuable because "generally girls do not come as readily to a center when there is only a male director present."¹⁶ Another reason for keeping both male and female instructors was that they had worked out an unspoken division of labor. The men taught classes in gymnastics, square-dance calling, archery, construction, and shooting, clubwork; whereas the women taught advanced tap dancing, ballroom dancing, and millinery.¹⁷

Park departments created public-relations divisions during the recreation-facility era. This new kind of bureaucratic self-promotion had strange consequences for the role of women. Photographs of beautiful women were used to promote parks, but women themselves did not invent these campaigns, so in this capacity they were neither park users nor policy makers. Immediately after the war, presumably in order to help reestablish women's proper place, park reports, newspapers, and other park publications for the first time, began to show women in sexually alluring poses. For example, a "Hollywood starlet" posed as sexily and appealingly as possible with a bow and arrow to promote archery in San Francisco's parks.¹⁸ In Chicago, the park reports show women in closeups with flowers. An upper torso and head shot of a beautiful young woman surrounded by azaleas ostensibly promoted the annual azalea and camellia show, but subliminally it promoted the idea that women are like beautiful flowers—passive, pickable, and otherwise controlled and appreciated at the will of others. Beautiful flowers, of course, should not be lifeguards and garage attendants. The pageants of the reform era became blossom-time festivals at which a woman was crowned "Blossomtime Queen."¹⁹ If this equation of women with flowers were not enough, it was reinforced linguistically in another bizarre

way. Immediately after the war, new chrysanthemums were created by hybridization and were named after women: Peggy Welch was a dark pink pompom, Doris Dowling was a dark bronze, Mrs. Maree Silence an amber, Shirley Head a pink, Flowertec a light bronze single, Miss Rita Fitzpatrick a pink pompom anemone, and Jeanio Winters a white pompom anemone.⁶⁰ This trivialization of women's imagery for public-relations purposes corresponded with the move to the suburbs and the removal of women from public life.

If the goal were to honor women symbolically, other ways of doing it were available. For example, a representative of the Illinois Federation of Women's Clubs asked that a roadway leading to the Adler Planetarium in Chicago be named for the first woman born in the state or for some woman who had achieved prominence because of her outstanding work.⁶¹ This was rare. In 1926 the San Francisco Chinese community requested that their local playground be named after a woman recreationist, Mildred Pollack, but the commissioners named it after a man instead, citing their policy against naming a park or playground for a living commissioner. In this simple act, two basic patterns are exposed: the white Anglo-Saxon commissioners, chose, rather than the Chinese community, and a male was commemorated rather than a female.⁶²

In the open-space era, feminism surged a second time, stimulating a number of firsts regarding female employment. The first female zookeeper in San Francisco was appointed in 1975 at age 35, and one-third of the applicants for the job had been women.⁶³ Women became park rangers in the county, state, and federal park systems.⁶⁴ In 1976 women organized a class-action suit against the San Francisco Park Commission for an "illegal and discriminatory" requirement that they lift a 140-pound sack to qualify for employment.⁶⁵ Women professionals were recruited to participate in the new programming of the open-space model. For example, in the late 1960s when park departments were trying to embrace the fine arts, a woman sculptor was hired to install an exhibit of large female figures in Central Park's Conservatory Garden. These "bountiful, full-bodied nanas" were, according to feminist artist Niki de Saint-Phalle, "messages of joy from the matriarchal society, which is what," she hoped, "will bring us back to warmth and peace."⁶⁶ A feminist organizer used a park to stage a rally in favor of the Equal Rights Amendment and to spur implementation of a childcare initiative passed by San Francisco voters in 1973.⁶⁷ These women were not agitating for the appropriation of Golden Gate Park itself to serve their special needs, but they did use the park as a stage for pressing for general societal needs.

Female members of the city-planning staffs and open-space activists have been major actors in the creation of and lobbying for open-space legislation.⁶⁸ Since the mid-1970s, schools of architecture and urban planning

have experienced an enormous increase in the proportion of women students, jumping from less than 10 percent to approximately 40 percent in major schools around the country. As these graduates begin to filter into the city-planning agencies, design firms, and environmental protection agencies perhaps parks will receive fresh attention.

Prospects

If women begin to advocate the kind of park service they want for themselves in their own interests, some specific programs are likely to surface. For example, nothing in the definition or practice of park service suggests that the women's movement could not turn around the old image of women as unathletic and make full use of the athletic facilities that now lie partially dormant during fiscal crises. Existing facilities are currently overcrowded by women of all ages who increasingly understand the value of exercise for their appearance, physical health, and mental well-being, especially since most of their jobs are sedentary. They should organize to demand better and more extensive hours for swimming pools and gymnasiums, for example. Parks could be turned to the purposes of the human-potential movement, since so many women are struggling with self-actualization and fulfillment. Compatible with this direction, parks could become holistic-health centers and sense centers with saunas and whirlpools.

As another example, community gardens, so popular with both sexes during both World Wars, should be reestablished. Vegetable and flower gardening offers activities which all ages, from children to elderly, have enjoyed. It is educational for children and relaxing for many adults: it involves exercise and yields a useful product. When park departments have issued permits for allotment gardens, the demand has always been greater than the spaces allocated.

Finally, because one of the most pressing needs of this society is for a rational process for raising children, parks could become a setting for private and governmental experimentation with different types and styles of day-care centers. Parks are an ideal site for this activity because they are near neighborhoods but not within them, so that their noise would not disturb local residents. The architecture is there, and the landscape is there; what is needed is money for staffing and the attitude that childrearing is a social, not only individual and family, function.

More generally, a fresh consideration of women's usage of parks is needed, one which puts it in the larger context of their distinctive urban needs and opportunities. Because women have not constituted a "social problem," few people, including women themselves, have realized that their use of the city might have a distinctive character. Yet F.L. Olmstead,

the nation's first professional park designer (beginning with Central Park in 1853), said women benefitted from cities because of their cultural advantages; schools, music, and fine arts: ". . . the greatest wealth can hardly command as much of these in the country as the poorest work-girl is offered . . . in Boston at the mere cost of a walk for a short distance over a good, firm, clean pathway, lighted at night and made interesting to her by shop fronts and a variety of people passing."⁹ More recently, in *The City Is the Frontier*, Charles Abrams has emphasized the potential advantages of urban life for single females looking for mates, as well as for mothers needing childcare support.¹⁰ His recommendations fly in the face of the patriarchal controls regarding sexuality.¹¹ Most recently, feminists have begun to write and convene about the issue of women's need of cities and how women must come to see urban-planning issues as women's issues.¹²

For women to identify themselves with urban issues will throw them headlong into the divisive issues—social, political, and economic—which park departments have traditionally skirted. Abolition, women's suffrage, temperance, the civil liberties, and the new feminism have received virtually not one word in 125 years of park reports; and partly as a result the role of women in public places is as problematic as it was in the nineteenth century. We must address these problems with an awareness of the power of planned physical environments to reinforce social structure. This awareness elevates the significance of parks as a vehicle for social reform which women can and should appropriate to serve their own needs.

Notes

1. This typology is currently available in Galen Cranz, "The Changing Roles of Urban Parks: From Pleasure Garden to Open Space System," *Landscape* vol. 22, no. 3 (Summer 1978):9-18.

2. The source is quoted in Thomas E. Will, "Public Parks and Playgrounds," *The Arena* vol. X, no. LVI (July 1894):277; and the City Council, *Documents for the City of Boston for the Year 1890* Document 15: 15th Annual Report of the Board of Commissioners of the Department of Parks, (Boston: 1890), p. 30.

3. For example, "San Francisco Belles Gain Health and Muscle on Stowe Lake," *San Francisco Call* vol. 15, no. 1 (11 October 1896).

4. Museum of the City of New York, photos and lithos pre-1900, Central Park File.

5. F.L. Olmsted, Jr., *Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh: Commission of City Planning, 1911).

6. Gym Director's report in Chicago South Park, *Annual Report for 1905* (Chicago: 1905), p. 46.

7. A small park might be divided by a fence, within which women and girls and little children would be allowed, while boys and men would be seated outside. (New York Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1913*, p. 7.) As late as 1922, the San Francisco Park Commission received a request for more benches in Huntington Square with signs to read, "These Benches and This Part of This Square is Hereby Reserved for Ladies and Children." The motion passed. (San Francisco Park Commission Minutes, April 1922, p. 620, in McLaren Lodge, Golden Gate Park.) And in August 1926, the Department of Health similarly requested that a portion of Columbia Square be fenced or roped off for the use of women and children, and again the park commission complied. Only in the 1930s did this kind of protective segregation wane.

8. New York Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1904*, p. 19.

9. Chicago South Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1904*, p. 34; and Chicago South Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1908*, p. 119.

10. P. Horace, "Park Architecture: Bathing Establishments," *The Park International* (July 1920):25-34.

11. The last example of a special area for women and children on a San Francisco beach was mentioned in May 1934 in the minutes of the San Francisco Park Commission.

12. Chicago Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1939*, p. 150.

13. Charles A. Boucher, "Family Recreation: Foe of Juvenile Delinquency," *Recreation* (February 1957):46.

14. Ben Solomon, "Preventive Recreation," *Recreation* (March 1951):566.

15. San Francisco Park Commission, Minutes for 6-7 November 1941, in McLaren Lodge, Golden Gate Park.

16. Of the few new activities developed just for women, all were sexually stereotyped. Toward the end of the Depression they decorated the lounge rooms in the local Chicago field houses. They hung wall hangings, draperies at the windows, brought in furniture and rugs. (Chicago Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1939*, p. 153.) Recreation programming during the war was oriented exclusively to servicemen, since only men were drafted into military service, so one female activity was to prepare entertainments for the men.

17. Chicago Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1947*, p. 18.

18. John Lindsay, *Urban Parks* (New York: Fusion Candidate for Mayor, 1965). Also, see the New York Park Commission's *Annual Park Report for 1967*. Park designers who expressed these new ideas included Paul Friedburg and Richard Dattner. (Personal interviews with administrators Thomas Hoving, Doris Freedman, Karin Bacon, Phyllis Robinson, and August Hecksher.)

19. See, for example, Whitney North Seymour, ed., *Small Urban Spaces* (New York: New York University Press, 1969).

20. For example, Betsey Head gave money to the New York park system (New York Annual Report, 1915). In San Francisco, Helene Strybing willed money to Golden Gate Park to build an arboretum modeled on Harvard's arboretum and named in honor of herself and her husband (Elizabeth McClintock, "History of Strybing Arboretum," vol. 31, no. 2 *California Horticultural Journal* (April 1970):60-64. Mrs. Sigmund Stern (Rosalie) was a patron of the arts in San Francisco, a member of the Recreation Commission since 1929, and the donor of the Stern Grove Park and its music concerts. For a review of her service to the City of San Francisco, see *San Francisco Call-Bulletin*, 31 January 1956. Most of the San Francisco newspaper clippings can be found in a scrapbook series called the *San Francisco Clipping File* in McLaren Lodge in Golden Gate Park. Otherwise they can be looked up individually by the page and date in any library which carries those papers on microfilm. Mrs. Stern funded a women's dormitory at the University of California and contributed to scholarships for girls and youths (boys) (*ibid.*). In 1933 Dr. Emma L. Merritt, Sutro's daughter, told the president of the Parks Commission that because of the Depression she would be unable to maintain the grounds at Sutro Heights any further (Minutes of the San Francisco Park Commission for April 1933, in McLaren Lodge, Golden Gate Park). When she died in 1938, she left the grounds of the Sutro Mansion to become a public park (Works Progress Administration Writer's Project, *San Francisco*, p. 318). The city never did anything with this donation and allowed the mansion to deteriorate so that it had to be pulled down once it was beyond repair. In 1933 Mrs. Ghirardelli donated a game shelter to a park (Minutes of the San Francisco Park Commission, March 1933, p. 14, in McLaren Lodge, Golden Gate Park).

21. *Supervised Recreation* (San Francisco Recreation Commission, 1939).

22. Galen Cranz, "Models of Park Usage: Ideology and the Development of Chicago's Park System," Ph.D. dissertation, 1971.

23. For San Francisco's Raymond Clary there is Eleanor Rossie; for New York's Henry Hope Reed there is the daughter of Samuel Parsons.

24. For example, the California Club, a women's organization, was established in support of the first playground in San Francisco at Bush and Hyde Streets as early as 1898.

25. Park administrators answered that they had run the new department at the peak of efficiency and the women's petition got nowhere. *San Francisco Examiner*, 15 April 1954, and *San Francisco News*, 20 April 1954.

26. "Park Chronicle: Women Active in Park Work," *Park International* (November 1920).

27. For a short time in the 1950s, men volunteers outnumbered women, which especially tickled the profession. *Park and Recreation Yearbook for 1951* (National Park and Recreation Association, 1951), p. 7.

28. Fred G. Heuschling, "Progress with 'Park and Recreation Week' ", *Parks and Recreation* vol. 32, no. 1 (January 1949):4.

29. For example, Robert W. Ruhe, "Skokie, Illinois: A Village of 24,000 Approves a \$1,755,000 Master Plan for Parks," *Parks and Recreation* (July 1955):8.

30. Chicago Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1937*, p. 161.

31. Ibid.

32. San Francisco *Post*, 18 July 1901.

33. M.K. Christensen, "Condensed Report of the Secretary of the Women's Auxiliary," American Park and Outdoor Association (Rochester, 1902), p. 51.

34. Mrs. Herman J. Hall, "Park Inconsistencies," 7 *American Park and Outdoor Art Association*, (July 1903):19.

35. Women had been attendants at toilets for women and children even in pleasure-garden days (F.L. Olmsted, Jr., "To Those Having the Care of Young Children," in *Forty Years of Landscape Architecture*, ed. T. Kimball, p. 418). The greater frequency of female employees started in the *San Francisco Annual Report of 1903*, p. 413, the *New York Annual Report for 1904*, p. 74, 76. In 1910 and thereafter, the San Francisco Park Commission hired "numerous" women Directors of Play (not the same as director of the field house) (San Francisco Park Commission, Minutes 1910 to 1914).

36. *Recreation and Park Yearbook*, 1956 (National Recreational Association). When the National Recreation Association had a school at Washington, D.C., most of the students were women; this is inferred from the students' being referred to as "girls" (Clarence F. Rainwater, *The Playground in the United States* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1927], p. 189 fne 146).

37. Quoted in Jay B. Nash, "Playgrounds," *Encyclopedia of Social Sciences*, vol. 12 (1932):163.

38. Chicago South Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1909*, p. 10.

39. Ibid., p. 37.

40. By 1905 Chicago had ten women instructors, eight graduates of normal schools of physical education, two college graduates, and four graduates of county or state normal schools. Of the ten men instructors, their educational qualifications were on the average slightly lower than those of the women. Chicago South Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1905*, p. 47.

41. Report of the Bureau of Recreation, New York Parks Commission, *Annual Report for 1912*, p. 44, and *Annual Report for 1913*, p. 112, describe the same rates.

42. In 1943 the Recreation Commission requested funds from the Lanham Act for day care after school hours from three to seven in the evening. The service lasted only a year. In the 1950s the idea was implicitly rejected through the emphasis on family togetherness.

43. Some hints at conflict between the commissioners and women play directors occurred when several were fired preemptorily, despite their protests, on various charges in the reform era.

44. S.R. DeBoer, "The War and Park Work," *Parks and Recreation* (July 1918):3.

45. Chicago Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1942*, pp. 23, 24, 26.

46. Chicago Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1943*, p. 173.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 174.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 220.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

50. Chicago Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1944*, p. 34, and *Annual Report for 1945*.

51. Chafe, *The American Women: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

52. Chicago Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1946*, p. 48.

53. Chicago Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1951*, p. 68.

54. *Recreation and Park Yearbook*, p. 25.

55. Subliminal use of gender in the language of the park reports aided in the process of replacing women with men. While images of women in saccharine and banal moods could be used to promote park activities, commercial advertisers also used the image of women in parks to promote their own products. For example, a five-by-five photograph of a woman showed her setting off for a picnic in Golden Gate Park. The text explained that Golden Gate Park was a playland full of natural and manmade wonders to explore, even though in the heart of the city. Because the park was so full of things to do, the "picnic-minded woman dresses for carefree comfort and variety of activity. Here she's wearing her Pooh-Bah Fake Fur Sweatshirt of washable orlon pile. It's light and cozy and soft, it handles like chiffon. Cuffs and the softly rolled boatneck are in a matching cablestitched knit. Available in beige or moss green. . . ." *San Francisco News*, 6 August 1959. This was an advertisement of the Emporium Collegian Active Sportswear Department.

56. *The Story of San Francisco's Teenage Centers* (San Francisco: Recreation Department, 1947).

57. Chicago Park Commission, *Sixth Annual Report* (Chicago: 1939), p. 236.

58. Or possibly these photos served to persuade men to patronize park services. *San Francisco News*, 16 February 1946.

59. Chicago Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1948*, p. 53.

60. Chicago Park Commission, *Annual Report for 1951*, p. 55.

61. Chicago Park Commission, *Biennial Report for 1932 to 1933*, pp. 25, 177. The road was named Achsah Bond Drive in honor of Mrs. Shadrach Bond, wife of the first governor of Illinois.

62. San Francisco Playground Commission, minutes for 21 July 1926, and 5 October 1927, in McLaren Lodge.

63. *San Francisco Examiner*, 14 July 1975.

64. Karen R. Quist, "Women in the Parks," *Parks and Recreation* (January 1972):91-108.

65. This classification suit was filed by Elsie Davis, aged 34, of San Francisco, and was reported in the *San Francisco Examiner*, 29 January 1976.

66. Gail Sheehy, "Nanas in the Park," *New York Magazine*, 3 June 1968, pp. 18-21.

67. "A Day in the Park for Women's Rights," *San Francisco Examiner*, 8 March 1976. The organizer was Linda Nordquist.

68. Allan Jacobs, *Making City Planning Work* (Chicago: American Society of Planning Officials, 1978), p. 286.

69. Frederick L. Olmsted, "Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns," *Journal of Social Science: Containing the Transactions of the American Association* (1871):1-36.

70. Charles Abrams, *The City is the Frontier* (1965).

71. The obsession with proper clothing—dress length, bathing suits, slacks, bikinis—expresses an anxiety about sexuality getting out of hand. Patriarchal controls established strong prohibitions against prostitution, unchaperoned trysting places, and dances.

72. For example, UCLA Conference of Planning for a Non-Sexist Society, Spring 1979; Gerda Wekerle, Rebecca Paterson, David Morely, eds., *New Space for Women* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview, 1980); Gerda Wekerle and David Popenoe, chairpersons, "Spatial Inequality in American Life: Consequences for Women," American Sociological Association, paper session, August 1978, San Francisco; Gerda Wekerle, "Women in the Urban Environment," *Signs* vol. 5, no. 3 (1965):5188-5214.



